

IN THE HARBOUR OF HOPE

MARY ELIZABETH BLAKE



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Books by
Mary Elizabeth Blake



POEMS

VERSES ALONG THE WAY

A SUMMER HOLIDAY IN
EUROPE

MEXICO : PICTURESQUE,
POLITICAL, PROGRESSIVE
*(Written in collaboration with
Margaret F. Sullivan.)*

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BY

MARY ELIZABETH BLAKE

AUTHOR OF "VERSES ALONG THE WAY," "A SUMMER
HOLIDAY IN EUROPE," ETC.



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To
THE CHILDREN

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MARY ELIZABETH BLAKE: WOMAN AND POET

THE much lamented passing away of Mary Elizabeth Blake before the publication of this latest collection of her poems, which appears now as she herself arranged it and with the name of her choice, calls for a brief estimate of the woman and the poet. An adequate presentation of her intimate life, with such fulness of detail as kindred and close friends naturally look for, will come later, and from those hands which have the right to give it. Here a friend but indicates the forces which moulded one of the rarest and sweetest personalities she has ever known, and the circumstances which evoked its sincere and harmonious expression in literature.

When Mary Elizabeth McGrath came with her parents from their native Ireland to the beautiful New England town with its wealth of patriotic associations, where the old family home is still cherished, she was a little maid of ten years; but through the teaching and close companionship of

her book-loving father, more advanced in her studies than most children four years older. She brought with her a child's vivid memories of the land of perennial green fields and April skies, an instinctive and intense love for the high and heroic, the faith and mysticism of her race, and all fireside piety and tenderness. But these were hid in the garden enclosed of a reserved and sensitive nature.

She found a sterner beauty on the rock-bound New England coast; patriotic ideals amid the memorials of "Abigail Adams of Quincy;" and educational opportunities of which she profited to the full. The "Simple Life" had not been preached in these days; but it was scrupulously lived in the rural towns of New England, and to the family of our poet it was dear and familiar. Her father, with his store of book knowledge, was also a skilled craftsman in marble. He cared much for things of the mind; little for money, and not at all for luxury. With a rare consistency to ideals, he gave over his business to his sons directly he had accumulated a modest store for himself and his wife. Reared in such environment his oldest daughter acquired and never lost, amid subsequent luxury, a certain exquisite temperance of

desire and simplicity of taste, and a fine discernment as to the essentials of happiness and refinement, which made her equally at ease among the great and the lowly.

The musical and the literary gift developed simultaneously in the young girl. At sixteen she was organist and choir director in the village church from which a kindly Italian Padre wisely guided his flock of Keltic blood. The full course of the Quincy schools completed and supplemented with training in the best of Boston's private schools, she was a teacher for a few years, after the manner of New England girlhood. Meantime the firstlings of her pen were appearing, now in the *Boston Gazette* of which P. B. Shillaber was editor; again in the *Boston Transcript*; often, especially in their poetic form, in *The Pilot*. "Marie of the Pilot" was as much a name to conjure with in those days among her warm-hearted fellow-believers of Keltic blood as had been "Mary of the Nation" in the stirring days of '48.

In her early twenties, she took an advanced course in music and the modern languages at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Manhattanville.

Over the pleasant paths of her young poetic honours, love came with ardour and insistence that

would not be denied into the life of the demure and reticent maiden, and the pale primroses and daisies gave place to the red and fragrant roses.

She was married in June, 1865, to Dr. John G. Blake, a graduate of the Harvard Medical School, and even then, a strong man in his profession. Having loved the poet before he had found the woman, he naturally encouraged the development of the former's gift. Indeed, it was as a happy wife and the joyful mother of many children that Mary Elizabeth Blake attained her high place as a poet. Of the interpreters of childhood to maturity, of the singers whose voice reaches the child-heart always, none in our day has surpassed her. She had the tenderness and delicious drollery which all true poets of childhood must have and her own distinct, indefinable charm, the flowering of her Keltic blood and her profound religious faith. This last characteristic relieves the inexpressible poignancy of her poems of loss — fitly the voice of any mother with home suddenly desolated by the death of a group of lovely and promising children — with sure and comforting vision of “the shining hills of Paradise,” where

The wee feet rest and play
In light and love alway.

During the young years of her children — her marriage was blessed with eleven, of whom five sons and one daughter survive her — Mrs. Blake was heart and soul devoted to them, and allowed herself such literary work as her popular “*Rambling Talks*” in the *Boston Journal*, merely as a recreation from the arduous cares of motherhood. Poems, however, welled from her heart spontaneously.

“You are one of the birds that must sing,” said Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes; noting in later years on the publication of her second book of poems, “the same spontaneous and natural expression of lovely feeling and sympathy which I recognized in your earlier work.”

She kept up her reading and her accomplishments for her children’s sake, studying for them and with them. A good Latin scholar, she helped her sons over many a difficult task, and her proficiency in English literature was not less valuable to them.

Mrs. Blake published no books until the early ’80’s, when her first volume, “*Poems*,” and a charming and popular travel-book, “*On the Wing*,” brought her into immediate prominence. These were followed by “*Mexico: Picturesque, Political, Progressive*,” in which she collaborated with her gifted friend, the late Margaret F. Sullivan. The

Right Reverend John Lancaster Spalding, D.D., Bishop of Peoria, Ill., and himself a notable poet and essayist, declared this book to be one of the strongest influences which induced him to visit Mexico. "A Summer Holiday in Europe" came next; then "Verses Along the Way," containing most of those historical ballads and poems of public events whose virile strength and sure grasp of the philosophy of individual life and of general history amazed those who knew not the poet well enough to divine beneath her womanly gentleness and her modest merriment as hostess or guest her breadth of mind and ripe scholarship.

Our poet never made the mistake too common among gifted women, of taking herself too seriously. Her ideals were the highest, and she had the saving sense of humour of her race. Her error would have been in diffidence of her powers, but for the home encouragement and stimulation, and the imperious demands on her reserve forces of such friends as John Boyle O'Reilly, with his "This you must do because you can do it;" or "This must have a wider audience, because it is worthy," compelling her to her best efforts.

She was in constant demand as the poet of notable patriotic and religious occasions, being the laureate

of Boston's commemoration of Wendell Phillips in 1884, and of Admiral Porter in 1891. She was also the poet of the Catholic Union's festival in honor of Pope Pius IX; of the Golden Jubilee of the Sisters of Charity, and of the Silver Jubilee of the Episcopate of the Most Reverend John J. Williams, D. D., Archbishop of Boston, as well as of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Charitable Irish Society.

Two volumes of her juvenile poems, "The Merry Months All" and "Youth in Twelve Centuries" appeared as holiday books; and may yet be re-collected with the "wonderful animal" poems and others which come not within the scope of the present volume.

The poems which follow, as well as those which have gone before, speak for themselves. But the singer is greater than the song; and to those who had the privilege of intimacy with that rich and well-balanced nature, she was dearer for herself than for the best of her work. In her own home in the privacy of family life, or as the charming and tactful hostess, she was at her best. Her most impressive characteristic was her modesty. Who ever heard from her own lips that she was fluent in all the modern languages and accom-

plished in the classic Latin? She had visited Europe five times; thrice on walking trips of educative purpose with her three younger children; and in every land, she could make herself at home with its people. But how shy she was of reference to those opportunities, unless, indeed, she could help some intending tourist or impart a pleasure to lives of little change!

To her home came the most eminent of literary workers, musicians and artists, the leaders in the medical profession, publicists, sages and scholars. Whittier and Holmes of an elder day; her contemporary authors on both sides of the Atlantic, were admirers of her work. She had friends among the rich and the titled at home and beyond seas; but nothing affected her simplicity. She was magnanimous; always delighting in the success of other literary workers and keen to indicate their especial points of excellence. She was strictly truthful and honourable, charitable and peace-loving; ready with extenuating circumstances even for obvious faults, and always happy to pass on the message of healing and reconciliation.

Never was wife and mother more cherished by husband and children than she. No happier home than hers, whether in the winter residence

in the Back Bay or the summer cottage at Green Hill, with its lovely garden of her own planting and cherishing.

She stimulated the patriotism of two lands. President Roosevelt was an admirer of her personality and her work.

Though pre-eminently a woman of the home, Mrs. Blake interested herself keenly in various organized movements for the intellectual and spiritual advancement of her fellow-believers and of all humanity. No work was more congenial to her than that of the Peace Society; for she felt that its success was the practical assertion of the brotherhood of man, closely bound up with the great cause of the reunion of Christendom, and the final triumph of true civilization. She aided the Society with her pen. Of her forceful pamphlet, "The Coming Reform: A Woman's Word," many thousands were distributed and a revised edition, demanded by the Spanish War, was also widely circulated.

A devoted Catholic, she commended her faith to those of differing belief by her joy in God's service and her unfailing courtesy and consideration for all. She lives in the hearts of her friends by the fragrant memory of her blameless and

beneficent life, and by her poetry which was always the expression of fair love and holy hope, and of the heroism of the hearth, the flag and the altar.

KATHERINE E. CONWAY.

IN THE HARBOUR OF HOPE



THE FIRST CROCUS

STILL frowned the Winter, proud in lofty scorn,
His stately ermine wrapped around the throne;
Monarch he seemed of ages yet unborn,
The world his own !

Cold from the North his fierce breath smiting fell,
Death crowned the hills with glory strange and
wild,
When lo ! beneath a hedge-side in the dell
A blossom smiled.

Vain is thy pomp, thou hoary-headed King !
Sped is thy reign and broken from this hour ;
One golden crocus, with the heart of Spring,
Mocks all thy power !

A LITTLE SERMON

A VAGABOND in ragged brown,
 Beflustered by the wind and rain,
Heedless of Fortune's wintry frown
That falls upon his ruffled crown,
 Taps gaily on my window pane.

Below upon the sodden bough,
 The cold, bare nest his coming waits;
Nor does the ice-bound land allow
Crumbs from her feasts to gladden now
 The hungry beggar at her gates.

Yet not for this doth he forswear
 His busy flights, his bluster gay,
His round bright eye that seems to dare
Scant daily bread and nipping air
 To take the joy of life away.

But cheerily with voice and wing,
 He braves the season's passing blight;
Contented waits what time may bring,
Hides in his heart the hope of Spring,
 And takes the dark day with the bright.

AT EIGHTY

LET who will sing of youthful cheer,
I know a holier joy !
The man who keeps at eighty year
The glad heart of the boy.

Who through all change hath held his trust ;
Who knows whate'er befall,
The law of life is fair and just,
And God is over all.

Who ne'er hath lost his soul's delight
In Nature's sweet repose,
But loved alike her day and night,
Her roses and her snows.

Upon the heights his feet have trod,
In upper airs of balm,
Where close communion with his God
Hath blessed with strength and calm.

Yet not too high to hold apart
From human sin and grief

The comfort of his pitying heart,
The helpful hand's relief.

And not too far for answering glow,
Whenever thought aspires
To light amid the shades below
Its climbing altar fires.

Not his the pale, ignoble pride
That counts by land and gold,
What place upon Life's mountain side
His brother man may hold.

But keen to see and quick to bless,
Though hid the spark and faint,
The soul's intrinsic nobleness,
The Hero and the Saint.

Ah! what to him are wealth or place
Where transient honour calls,
The cheery sunshine of whose face
Doth bless where'er it falls.

Who rich with freight of fourscore years,
The sails set fair above,
His ship of Life so bravely steers
In Peace, and Hope, and Love.

Lord ! call not homeward. Hold apart
Mid Thine unreckoned hours,
The first deep grief his gentle heart
Will e'er have given to ours !

IN THE WINDY APRIL

In the windy April,
When the world's aglow
With crocus bell and daffodil,
And primroses do blow
Across the dawning meadow
In spray of green and gold,—
Every nook in all the land
Its secret joy doth hold.
Brightly and lightly
Drifting swallows fly,
Yet my heart is lonesome,
— Who knows why!

In the windy April,
Spent is Winter's pain;
Cheery, piping robin
Struts the fields again;
Ears are glad for hearing,
Eyes are glad for sight
Of all the bonny green things
Climbing to the light.

Gay day is gray day
Rainy day or dry,
Still my heart is lonesome,
— Who knows why!

In the windy April,
Dear is Hope's unrest,
Throbbing in the frozen ground,
In the frozen breast;
Clouds fair as sunshine
Flash and fade away;
Silver is the night time,
Golden is the day;
Best time and blest time
Of the year is nigh,
Still my heart is lonesome,
— God knows why!

A LOVE SONG

Love doth walk in many a land,
Under many roofs doth dwell,
Taketh beggars by the hand,
And the crown'd king as well,
Whispers soft to young and old,
Now doth stoop and now aspire,
Laughs at poverty and gold,
Plays alike with frost and fire; —
Since the happy world began,
Love hath been 'twixt maid and man,
Sometimes flouting, sometimes pouting, as it goes
and comes again;
Now with frown and now with kiss,
Here a plague and there a bliss,
But the sweetest of all lovers is a little lad of ten.

Love hath many a snare to set,
— Who shall know his changeful smiles? —
This to joy and that to fret,
Here with tears and there with smiles;
Love sets many a one to dance
When his merry pipes do play,

And the skies of old romance
Arch the sombre world to-day.
 'Till the weary world doth end,
 Love shall be 'twixt friend and friend,
Now deceiving, now believing, as it goes and
 comes again;
 Full of shade or full of sun,
 As the changing seasons run,
But the dearest of all lovers is the little lad of ten.

For within his sunny eyes
Nor deceit nor coldness dwell;
Never shadow of disguise
 Breaks the magic of the spell;
In his ardent, close embrace,
 Lives the pulse of life divine;
And the glory of his face
 Makes the darkest hour to shine; —
 Let Love come or soon or late,
 Come as crown or come as fate,
Come for once and come for all, never more to
 pass again, —
 Still his rarest and his best,
 In the Mother's heart will rest,
And the truest of all lovers be a little lad of ten.

HELLAS! — 1897

THOU who wast fair in the dawn when day of
the earth was young!
When joy was near to the fount, and marrow of
strength in men
Bourgeoned in mighty deeds by bards immortal
sung, —
Hellas! Star of the past! Arise in the east again!

Little they knew, who sneered at the olden glory
fled,
And the red, hot blood grown cold in the breast
of thy heroes' sons;
Spartan thy soul once more as when Marathon's
field grew red,
Fronting a menacing world and the sullen-browed
Moslem guns.

Clearer thy vision than ours, bent upon lowlier
aims,

Braver thine arm to strike where cowardly pulses
fail,
Thine is the swift advance that our faltering
purpose shames,
— Weighing the cost and the gain, trimming the
cautious sail.

Never in golden days when proud Thermopylæ
led
Through sting of defeat and doubt, through pain
and shadow of death,
Up to immortal life the ghosts of its laureled dead,
Such glory of hope forlorn hath made man hold
his breath.

Frail 'mid the nations that tower above thee in
splendour and might,
Threatened by hands that should help, weakened
by doubts that lurk
Under the shadow of cant, lonely and lone in
the fight,
Springing like lion from leash full at the throat of
the Turk, —

Hail to thee! Doer of deeds when stronger sinews
grow weak!

Daring and swift as in days when the old gods
walked with men;

Heart of the world beats with thee; honour and
love to the Greek; —

Hellas, Star of the Past! Arise in the east again!

THE ANSWER

THROUGH the long night she watched beside her
dead:

“ Grant me a sign, O God of Life and Light !
Lest in the ocean of despair and dread
My lost soul sink tonight ! ”

Then in the east the sudden roses stirred ;
A soft breath crept amid the whispering corn ;
And the sweet shrillness of the piping bird
Hailed the awaking morn !

A SPRING WOOING

'Twas in the nipping morning, the air was sharp
and chill,

She passed across the meadow and up the windy
hill;

Slim and straight her height was, like a queen
her grace,

Sunny were the bright locks tossed about her face;
Soft she drew me after her step so light and fleet,
And all my heart went dancing to the music of
her feet, —

March! March! with the tassels on the
larch!

And O the day when first I saw my Dearie!

All the dawning Springtime I sought her near
and far,

I was like a shipwrecked soul, she my guiding
star;

Every wandering fancy compassed her about,
Day time or night time I could not shut her out;
Fain would I entreat her, but lips were feared to
speak,

Till once when fell the gloaming they found her
 bonny cheek!

 May! May! when apple blooms were gay!
And O the day when first I kissed my Dearie!

Girl of the red mouth! Girl of my delight!
Sure for very love of you I could die tonight!
But fie, to speak of dying! when the morrow's
 morn

Brings you up the green lane by the flowering
 thorn;

White will be your bonnet, and white your snowy
 gown,

And white the world before me to see you walk-
 ing down, —

 June! June! with wedding bells in tune!
And O the day that gives to me my Dearie!

THE MARCHING OF THE GRASS

O THE marching of the grass!
O the joy that comes to pass,
When the mighty, silent army, with green banners
 overblown,
Drags King Winter from his throne!
Conquers all his barren valleys, climbs the ram-
 part of the hill,
Steals along by wayside hedges, fords the river
 calm and still,
Undermines the forest arches, overtops the castle
 wall,
Swift invading wins the cities and the hamlets
 brown and small, —
 Till the whole broad world is captured;
 And the heart of man enraptured,
 Thrills with passion of delight,
 Sunny morn and dewy night,
As the joyous, rhythmic measure marketh time for
 lad and lass
 To the marching,
 Marching,
 Marching of the grass.

O the marching of the grass!
Fairer things may come to pass
In the golden days of Summer: roses drunk
with wine of June;
Flitting wild birds all a-tune
To the rosy mantled morning; wedding garments wove in flowers;
Balm of incense; veils of radiance shot with jewelled mist of showers;
Hymning choirs of happy music, upward tossed from earth to sky;
The rich pean of completeness in full chorus lifted high; —
What is then their regal splendour,
To the love-beat shy and tender
With which Hope, the blest, doth chime,
Through Life's pulses marking time
For the haunting spell of gladness that doth come,
— and go, alas!
With the marching,
Marching,
Marching of the grass.

THE LABOURER

THOU who dost stand nearer the hidden source
Of Earth's primeval force!
Upon whose Atlas' shoulders, strong, sublime,
The undying walls of Time
Lift their brave fronts, and as in Heaven's first
plan,
Give peace and hope for future years to man!

No backward-sloping brow, or vacant mind
Doth mark thee from thy kind,
With slavish instinct or in brutal pain
Bearing the mark of Cain;
But pride of place, as one within whose breast
The eternal bulwarks of the nations rest.

Closer thou art to golden joy and love
Than those who dwell above;
And dearer the fair feast thy spirit knows,
— Calm nights and sweet repose, —
Than they whose narrower souls may not divine
The beauty and the fearlessness of thine.

Why shouldst thou humble be, or hide in shame
The glory of the name
That marks the wearer of His state, Who blessed
Thy rank above the rest;
And left for ever in thy chosen hand
The safety and the honour of the land?

High is thy place, who upon hill and fen
Dost lift the homes of men,
Till the bare fields, and build of stone and steel
The engines of their weal;
Giving thy life blood red from Nature's springs,
To plenish the pale veins of outworn kings.

Hail to thee, Labourer! On whom doth rest
The thriving world's behest!
True to thyself, through what far-soaring arch
Thy conquering feet shall march,
Thou who dost snatch from each day's honest
toil
Great Antaeus' strength, new-given from the soil.

Hail to thee, Labourer! Upon whose face
God set his seal of grace!

Whose might hath built the Pyramids; whose
hands

Feed all the hungry lands;
Lift thy proud head, and bear thy flag unfurled,
Above the foremost rank of our advancing world!

THREE FESTIVAL OVERTURES

I

EASTER DAY

O LOVELY day of Easter, thou art the dearest
thing
That comes with joy and solace to all the happy
Spring!
The brightest flower and purest, the song most
sweet and clear
That stirs with buoyant promise the pulses of the
year.

Glad is April sunshine; strong the March winds'
breath,
Calling all the little leaves from frozen sleep of
death;
Sweet the balmy fragrance that scents the breath
of May; —
But what is all their beauty to the blessed Easter
Day!

Laugh the meadows snooded with ribbons green
 of grass;

Silver breasted swallows in long homeward flights
 do pass;

All the land is smiling with little flowers at play;
But the music of thy message is holier than they.

Lilting go the bright streams, singing as they run;
Hide the dimpling shadows from seeking of the
 sun;

Wee young lambs are bleating in safe and sheltered fold;

And the newer day is dawning on darkness of
 the old.

Still art thou the fairest! When thy feet pass by
Through God's silent acres, all the seeds that lie
Planted for His harvest, planted still and deep,
Thrill beneath thy footsteps, waken out of sleep, —

Rise to life and glory, rise to hope and love,
Rise to bloom and bourgeon in fairer fields above;
Rise to lift and strengthen with healing touch
 and kind,

Hearts that else were broken, eyes that else were
 blind.

O come thou in the dark time or come thou in
the bright,

Thou art the chiefest treasure of all the year's
delight!

Of all its bliss and beauty the fair and gladdest
thing, —

The fadeless lily shining, that bears the soul
of Spring!

II

ALL SAINTS

Day of Delight !
That bids the golden flowers of Memory bloom
 On each forgotten grave
 That holds or serf, or slave,
Or starving beggar crying in the night,
Who knew to hold his faith through stress and
 gloom.

Day of Content !
Since howsoever hid from human ken
 By lowliness of place,
 By lack of gold, or grace,
Thine eye hath measured how his days were
 spent,
And thy rich hand hath healed the hurts of men.

Day of Good Cheer !
To each poor lowly one, with waiting faint,
 Who, lifting trusting eyes
 To hills of Paradise,
And seeing Him, the Watcher, ever near,
Can look to know the glory of the Saint.

III

AT CHRISTMAS IN THE MORNING

At Christmas in the morning
The little birds do sing,
And " Oh ! " they say :
" Thou happy day
That comes to tell of Spring !
For past is now the longest night,
The year is turning to the light ;
'Tis Christmas morning ! "

At Christmas in the morning
The little children wake,
And loud they call :
" Now joy to all,
For Christ the Saviour's sake !
There's nought to fret, there's nought to
fear,
This sweetest day of all the year, —
'Tis Christmas morning ! "

At Christmas in the morning,
The heavy-hearted rise,

And cry: " I wish

 An angel's kiss

 Hath rested on our eyes!

 A Star hath broke our night of pain,

 The dawn of Hope shines clear again,

'Tis Christmas morning! "

THE IRISH IN AMERICA

Who are these that are gathered to-day in plenty
and peace
Through length and breadth of the land, like harvest
of ripened grain?
Wholesome in honour and worth, rich in the strong
increase
Of men who have wrestled and won from stubborn
field and plain.

Who are these that have shown the worth of an
honoured name,
The grip of the good right hand, the might of
strong souls and true;
Sons of the soil they have won, sharers in all her
fame,
Who built from the old world's wreck the fortune
that made the new!

Can it be seed of the Gael that lifts itself thus to
the light?
Can it be seed that was tossed like chaff to the
stormy wind?

Weakened by want and grief, starved by the famine
 blight,
Cast from its birthright of hope with all its promise
 behind?

Sons of the dear old mother that waits beyond
 the sea,
Waits, and watches for dawn on her night of
 sorrow and shame,
Proud that fruit of her womb can stand where
 the proudest be,
Glad of the fame of the brood that arise to bless
 her name.

Some of the brave seed dropped in the wild and
 lonesome way,
Never to quicken again till the dead from the sea
 arise;
Some on the bare rock fell and ravening birds
 of prey
Snatched it for ever away from joy of the summer
 skies;

But some in the furrow was sown of Liberty's
 generous soil,
Rich with vigour, and warmed by Freedom's fostering
 ray;

With Peace to strengthen, and Hope to lift the
burden of toil,
And rest of the future to cheer the labour begun
to-day.

Here on the wind-swept edge of the wild New
England shore,
Beaten by many a blast, pinched by the frost
and fire,
See how the harvest fields have bourgeoned from
more to more,
And the plenteous sheaves of success have ripened
above the mire !

For the prejudice smiting its growth was ever of
ignorance bred,
That knew not the race or the creed it blindly
strove to slay;
And struggle is good for the soul that looks to the
goal ahead, —
For trial is but the flail that winnows the chaff
away.

Praise to thee, Land of the West, that welcomed
the exiled feet,
Warmed and sheltered and blessed with honour
and fair renown,

Opened thy generous arms, and turning the
bitter to sweet,
Silenced the menace of Fate, and made of her
cross a crown!

And praise to thee, Motherland fair, whose dower
to these thy sons
Hath been to them buckler and shield wherever
their lot was cast:
The old, strong Faith that still with pulse of their
heart blood runs,
The Honour that builds its hope on pride in a
vanished past!

DAVID AND GOLIATH

My little lad, — whom doubt assailed
In our poor human fashion,
Because nine times he tried, and failed,
To check his furious passion, —

Would fly from the unequal strife,
Leave courage to his betters,
And wear through all his hampered life
Hot temper's iron fetters.

Nay! never heed the stubborn thing;
Be brave and self reliant;
The smallest stone in Patience' sling
Can kill the greatest giant!

BELIEF

SEE where along the grimed and stormy street

The brown, small sparrow under Winter's stress
Pecks his poor food and thanks with twittering
sweet,

— Man, shall thy faith be less?

And there where turbid waters fall apart

From hidden depths of tangled ooze and mire,
The tall white lily lifts its golden heart,

— Soul, shalt not thou aspire?

CHRYSANTHEMUM

SHE was a beggar maid with pallid face
And tangled tresses by the rough wind blown,
Ragged the garb that hid her fragile grace,
Until the King passed by and knew his own;

Robed her in splendour, crowned her modest brow
With flash of gold and veils of silken sheen;
Then did the land in waiting homage bow,
And men first saw the beauty of the Queen.

TWO ROSES

ROSE of the Sunset, fading into night,
Touched by its sordid blight;
Why dost thou so, except to show the fate
Of fallen nature's state,
Which for a little hour doth burn and glow,
Then sudden lapses into gloom, and dies to all
below.

Rose of the Dawn, swift blooming unto day!
Let not thy joy delay;
Pour on the soul thy healing joy and wine,
Perfume of love divine;
Tell it that soon, Time's little darkness o'er,
The eternal Sun of Life shall rise above the morn-
ing shore.

A PORTRAIT

WHERE she doth walk, the common street
Grows fragrant as her footsteps pass,
As where one treads with careless feet
On violets hidden in the grass;

And when she speaks, within a land
Of rare delight doth fancy roam,
As if on some far distant strand
To homesick hearts came sound of home.

NOVEMBER

THE gray day sits
Like a pale nun in cloistered silence bowed,
Wrapped in the grayer mantle of the cloud;
While upward flits
The prayer her pure heart breathes for all below,
Like yon white-wingèd seagull rising slow.

AN IRISH MOTHER'S LULLABY

My dearie! my wee thing! the world is all a-cold,
The sullen Winter's piping is shrill across
the wold,
No bloom is in the garden, no leaf upon the tree,
But in your eyes, my bright one, the Summer
stays with me.

Macushla! my birdling! the lilting song is still,
That used to wake the morning upon the rosy
hill,
The hunger and the silence lie heavy upon men,
But in your voice, my starling, the dawning
sings again.

My heart's love! mine own one! the night is
dark and drear,
The lowness should be on me, the sorrow and
the fear;
But God forgive my daring! I'm laughing night
and day,
With you upon my bosom, my little breath of
May!

KATHLEEN

SHALL we deem the Springtime dead,
Now that Kathleen's smile hath fled?
Or the blessèd Easter skies
Dimmed for loss of her clear eyes?
Shall we, for her early blight,
Turn from Life and Life's delight,
And with sullen, vain regret
Ask of God that we forget?

Nay, sweet spirit! Brave and pure,
Strong to dare and to endure,
Such is not thy soul's behest
To the hearts that loved thee best;
Still more close our eyes are drawn
To the promise of the dawn,
And for ever joy shall be
Sweeter, for the thought of thee!

THE SOUL'S JOURNEY

FORTH from the East she fares
In that pale light where night and morning meet;
And with each step her faltering effort dares,
Life's long dark shadow moves before her feet.

Pulses the noontide hymn;
Swifter she speeds along the shining ways,
Strong in great purpose; while the comrade grim
Crouches beneath and shuns her eager gaze.

Cometh the sunset clear;
Full to the west she turns with tranquil mind,
Seeking the golden peace that lies so near, —
At last! at last! the shadow falls behind!

A LAMENT

IF from the face of the world
Were glory and light withdrawn, —
Red of the rose and blue of the sky,
Winds a-wooing on treetops high,
Song of the bird in glad boughs curled,
Joy of the Spring, and Dawn!
Ripple of waters ebbing and flowing,
Green of the grass in fair fields growing, —
All would I give, nor grieve at giving,
With hope in my heart, and strength for living,
If but my soul were still beguiled
By the laugh of the child!

But let that voice be taken,
Then is all splendour fled
Dazzle of snow for Winter's praise,
Light of the home on hearths ablaze,
Perfume from June buds shaken,
Pale are ye grown and dead.
Gray are the waters coming and going,
Silent the grass in churchyards growing,

Grief of my grief, beyond all bearing,
Strength have I none for hope or daring, —
God! let me be again beguiled
 By the laugh of my child.

THE DIFFERENCE

YOUNG grief is hot grief,
Sudden scorching bud and leaf, —
Then swift the tears rain,
Bud and leaf bloom again.
But old grief is cold grief!
Kills together root and sheaf;
Spring comes back to sea and sky,
Blasted is the core for aye!

One is the gray dark
Hides the dawn o' day;
Loud sings the soaring lark,
And soft it melts away.
And one is the black dark,
Cold and scant of breath,
As the twilight gaunt and stark
Sinks in night's grim death.

God! we bless thy promise fond:
Morn of heaven waits beyond!

THE PASSAGE

WAITED the souls by the river,
— The strange souls naked and cold,
Pale yet from the last death shiver, —
The Ferryman old.

Shrouded like some gray morrow,
Outspake the Boatman grim:
“ Who hath known deepest sorrow
First take I him.”

Like wail of wintry weather,
Calling their woes aloud,
Moaned then and spoke together
The fearsome crowd.

Saying: “ My griefs rush crowding:
Gold did I leave, and joy,
For chill of the dark grave’s shrouding
And Death’s annoy.”

“ Mine is the harsher story:
Shouting voices of men

Never, or Fame, or Glory,
To know again."

"Darker my woe and deeper:
Greater is Love than Pride,
Called by the Silent Reaper
I left my bride!"

One, in the shadow hiding,
Uttered nor word nor cry;
"Say now, what cause for chiding
When thou didst die?"

"Of nought did Death bereave me.
Long of all bliss forlorn,
Nought did I leave to grieve me,
And none to mourn."

Spake the dark boatman choosing:
"His is the greater dole
Who hath nought left for losing;
— Thou first, O Soul!"

WHAT THE WIFE'S HEART SAID

MINE own true love! I know that thou dost
hold me

Enshrined, of all thy fondest hopes a part;
That not a secret thought but doth enfold me
In constant truth to thy most loyal heart.

I know that if there came a cloud tomorrow
To dim my life, thine own would gladly throw
Its joy away to take my share of sorrow,
And walk where'er my sadder feet must go.

And yet, and yet, — O strange soul of the woman!
Forever fain upon its bliss to dwell,
Divine in trust but in its weakness human, —
Tell me the love that I do know so well.

Speak, my Beloved! the proud reserve defying
That conscious honour to its aid doth call;
Let thy dear lips to mine be still replying,
Till the last silence comes to answer all.

Speak! for too oft the weary spirit faileth,
 The mists obscure earth's fairest sun of bliss,
 The rust of Time its treasure still assaileth;
 But Love doth heal the hurt with voice and kiss,

And cheer the dullest gloom of wintry weather.
 Oh! let who will to silvern silence flee,
 But while we tread the path of Life together,
 Let speech be golden between thee and me!

IN EXILE

THE green is on the grass and the blue is in the
sky,
And the soft, wet winds of April hurry by;
The earth laughs loud to the waves upon the
shore,
But I'm sad for the land I shall never see more.

And often in the night time and often in the day
I know by the tears that my heart is far away;
I know by the tears that my heart is longing sore
For the fair lost land I shall never see more.

Peace is here and plenty, — O the glad relief! —
With laughing of the children between my soul
and grief;
Sorrow is behind us and happy days before, —
But God be with the land I shall never see more!

And deep shame upon me that any one should
hear!
The black cloud is gone of the hunger and the fear,

The black care that sat like a wolf beside the
door,
In the far, far land I shall never see more.

Ever Blessed Saviour! be not wroth with me!
For all Thy gifts and mercies, praise and glory be;
But the shadow's in my eyes for the little one I
bore,
Who's asleep in the land I shall never see more.

TO A LITTLE MAID

How should little maidens grow
When they're ten or over?
In the sunshine and the air,
Wholesome, simple, fresh and fair,
As the bonny daisies blow,
And the happy clover.

How should little lassies speak
At this time of living?
As the birds do, and the bees,
Singing through the flowers and trees,
Till each mortal fain would seek
Joy her lips are giving.

How about her eyes and ears
At this stage of growing?
Like the clear, unclouded skies,
Not too eager or too wise,
So that all she sees and hears
May be worth the knowing.

And the little maiden's heart?

Ah! for that we're praying

That it strong and pure may grow;

— God who loveth children so,

Keep her from all guile apart,

Through Life's mazes straying!

SOUTH AFRICA

1900

LAND that is struggling for life under foot of the
raider!

Land deep-trampled in gore for the greed of the
trader!

For the unequal fight
Weak in all strength but Right!

Might may do thee to death, and revenge may
rend thee;

Never a hand of the cowardly world befriend thee;
Still shalt thou win the goal
Dear to the hero's soul!

Never before since the days when Leonidas'
story

Spurred the spirit of Greece to daring and glory,
Hath such fierce pride again
Flamed in the hearts of men,

As at the sight of thy sons at the enemy hurled,
Farmers embattled again to arouse the world
To knowledge of loftier things
Than gold and the power of Kings!

O be but Fortune true to the brave who dare her !
Matching their rarer life with a recompense
rarer !

Leaving to sons of the soil
Land of their birthright of toil !

But if nor honour nor love shall avail to retrieve
thee,

If of both freedom and life the red lion bereave
thee,

Still shall thy Parthian dart
Pierce the grim conqueror's heart !

Never again shall the glamour of conquest avail
him !

Never again shall the weak-handed fear to assail
him,

Who hath put honour aside
For lust of power and pride.

Scar of thy wounds shall he bear that shall never
know healing,

Unto the nations his shame and his weakness
revealing !

Long may the agony be,
Yet shall he die through thee

ADMIRAL PORTER

Room among the Great Captains! Room
 'Mid those of the land and those of the sea!
 For him who stands on the quarter deck,
 Steering through fury of wind and wreck,
While cannons thunder and mortars boom,
 And haven of peace lies far a-lee.

Daringest, noblest in all the strife,
 — Honour him, Fame, with thy trumpet tones!—
 Who woke at the cry of his country's need
 To flower of valour and fruit of deed,
Till the calm, slow pulse of our colder life
 Thrilled with the ardour of Perry and Jones.

Child of the ocean! Trained to prize
 Its free, wild air as his native breath;
 Soul of its soul, it was his to know
 Its passion above and its calm below, —
The storm-swift daring that strikes and flies,
 Or holds to its purpose through blows and death.

Speak for him, Orleans' letters of fire!

When his tree-crowned masts held the shore
in sight,

Like the moving woods of Dunsinane,

While prowess and pride of the South were
vain,

Till the red levees like a funeral pyre

Blazed in the gloom of the April night.

Speak for him, Father of Waters, thou!

Whose waves upbore him to victory,

By river, and stream, and embattled town,

Where Vicksburg fair from her heights
looked down,

And the land fell under his conquering prow

From Cairo's fields to shore of the sea.

Speak for him louder and clearer than all,

Glow of the generous heart and just!

That ever was foremost to snatch from fame

Laurel of praise for another's name;

That never was deaf to a comrade's call,

That never was false to a comrade's trust.

Brother and friend of chieftains he!

Sherman, and Grant, and Farragut

Knew the strength of the hand they clasped :
Crushing like steel the thing it grasped,
Till the shell of the great Confederacy
Split as a squirrel would crack a nut.

O Morning Land ! Thou art wondrous fair !
The dawn is glad on thy thousand hills !
Thine is the hope of the future's need,
With Freedom for gospel, and Peace for
creed ;
Stretched are thine arms to save and spare ;
Balm of sweet healing thy touch instils !

Armourless art thou from head to heel !
Bare is thy breast to the death-dealing guns.
But who shall dare thee while love is bold,
While treasure of heroes is richer than gold,
And stronger than ramparts of fire or of steel
Are those of the Nation which beareth such sons !

VALE

WHEN the joy-sandaled feet of the Summer depart
from the valley and mountain,
And the small, pale flowers lie dead for grief
that her reign is o'er,
When the leaf is brown on the tree, and the stream
is dry at the fountain,
And the tide of life ebbs far on the beautiful,
desolate shore, —
Then do the birds lament, from their glad
haunts flying;
Then do the swift rains fall with sobbing
and sighing;
Then does the poet chant low, through the
sad land crying,
With grief for the red dawns faded, and glory
that comes no more.

But when the sceptre of Winter is broke, and the
veil of her splendour
Falls from the face of the hills, and the wide,
white silence is stirred
By envious ripples of sound, while the great heart
loving and tender

Breaks in her lonesome breast, with a hope too
long deferred, —
Never a voice is lifted to stay her going;
Never a tear doth fall for her own fast-flowing;
Never the warmth of a hand that her own
hand knowing,
Shall stir with its passionate clasp, though the
mute lips speak no word.

Nay! shall she speed from the land with no
whisper of love to caress her?
Nay! shall she slip from our arms with never
a tear of regret?
For her full-flowing springs of delight shall the
summer-starved spirit not bless her?
And with tenderest thought of the past, the eyes
of her lovers be wet? —
Sing in her praise, kind souls that would
fain bemoan her!
Sing for the silent birds that have never
known her!
Sing, till the clamorous hearts that would
swift dethrone her
Melt into longing and love, for grief that her sun
is set!

AT CHRISTMAS TIDE

THE Soul cried to its Angel: " Lo,
My lot is fallen on evil days!
God speaks no more to those below,
Nor leads their feet through heavenly ways.
Man loves no more his brother man,
As in the saintly days of old,
When holy zeal all fear outran,
And virtue stood for more than gold.
The fervour and the joy are flown,
Since Love is cold and Faith is dead;
Each bears his pain and toil alone,"
The Soul unto its Angel said.

But spake the Angel: " Nay! not thus
Do Made and Maker drift apart;
Still speaks the voice of God in us,
To nerve the arm and fire the heart.
Strong hands still clasp, pure thoughts aspire,
To lift the weaker brother's load;
Prometheus-like to warm with fire
Of heavenly Love earth's poor abode.

Fair Charity and fairer Peace

Still make for man the highest goal,
And so shall make till Time doth cease!"

Thus said its Angel to the Soul.

*And Lo! as thus the bright one spoke,
The blessed dawn of Christmas broke.*

IN DONEGAL

I WAS the mother of six, and joy
Sang in my heart like a bird in air;
Tall and ruddy was each fair boy,
And Life was golden and Hope was fair.

Then as manhood stretched out a hand
— Fast the tides of the swift years flow! —
Fortune called from the Western land,
And one and another I saw them go.

One and another till five had flown,
But still I sat with a heart resigned;
Never my lips made sigh or moan,
For the youngest and dearest staid behind!

Then at last came a woful day,
— Black was the sun and the sky to me, —
They wooed the last from his home away,
And he went to his brothers across the sea.

Gifts they sent me, and gold galore;
Word they wrote me of wealth and fame;

Honour they brought to the name they bore;
But the dark of my heart was still the same.

I stormed the gates of Heaven with prayer!
And ever across the ocean's track
I sent the cry of my soul's despair:
“ Let him come back ! Let him come back ! ”

* * * * *

I can watch his sleep from my open door.
O answer cruel ! O answer kind !
For now for ever and evermore
My youngest and dearest stays behind.

A JUBILEE ODE

WHAT are the years of Time?
Pale motes that flash and fade beneath the
 sun,
Phantoms of griefs matured and joys begun,
Or giants striding on with step sublime
That echoes and will echo till the last
Great trumpet tone of earthly pomp be past!
Weakest and strongest of all powers that press
The lives and hearts of men to curse or bless,
 As with poor, puny skill
They shape them to their ends for good or ill,
Making them serve as sceptre or as rod;
Foreknowing them as branches of the tree
 Of dread Eternity,
Which stands for ever in the Courts of God!

What are the years of Time?
A little space of day, and then the night;
A little span of sorrow and delight;
 Of dirges tolling and of joy-bells chime.
Yet can their calm, slow-moving, noiseless
 feet

Marshal the world to glory or defeat;
Lure forceful Wrong behind the prison bars,
And leash triumphant Right beyond the morn-
ing stars!

Or, swift as winds, and aimless too as they,
Bid heedless moments fleet and pass away.

And the short Life of Man,
Measured by moments' span, —
How shall we count its varied force, or trace
Its lordly might divine, its pitiful, poor grace!
Weaker than all weak things, a flash, a breath,
A sigh expiring on the lips of Death,
A reed wind-shaken; or a power supreme,
Greater than height or depth, a kindling
gleam
Of that great light by Love Immortal thrown
Across the clouds by doubt or darkness
driven,
To shine with ray immortal as Its own,
And with Itself to know the bliss of Heaven.

Time and the Life of Man! What may not to-
gether
The great twain work for glory or bitterest
shame;

Whether they strive for the kingdom of God, or
whether

Sound in their ears but the thin, weak pipings
of Fame;

Kings on the throne, holding the baubles of power;

Soldiers fighting the battles of war or peace;

Meek, pale saints with love for immortal dower;

Wisdom seeking to measure the soul's increase;

The poor man strong with the noble strength of
labour;

The rich man weak in spite of his golden gain;

Selfishness striving for self and smiting the neighbour;

Knowledge that causeth, and Science that
conquers pain;

Ignorance flaunting its brutal power in the nations;

Mercy lifting its shining banner on high;

Each through the changing woof of rank and of
• stations

Weaving its web as the swift, strange shuttles fly.

Time and the Life of Man! — What forms
aghast,

Born of their deeds do fright the shuddering
past;

When, moved alone by erring human will,
Each small ambition worked its petty ill,

Ruled its short hour with stern, destroying
 might,
And left its pathway seared with awful blight.
Or if some kindlier impulse moved the mind
To gentler thought for welfare of mankind,
 'Twas but as summer winds that come
 and go;
Or like the waves in motion
Above the restless ocean,
While silently the changeless depths sleep dark
and still below.

But when the Christian comes, his soul
 afame
For the high glory of his Master's name,
Burning with Faith and Charity divine,
And light of Hope that makes the earth to
 shine
With steadfast splendour, bringing unto earth
The joy transcendant of immortal birth,
Then for the first time Man, with heart elate,
Hath known the pride and honour of his state:—
Alone no more, nor cravenly allied
To narrow schemes of policy or pride,
To weak vain-glory, to the greed of pelf,
To the poor worship of the poorer self, —

But to the Power Supreme that dwells above,
Uplifted in humility and love,
Unawed by stern misfortune's fiercest blow,
Serene alike in gladness and in woe,
Made strong by sacrifice, made rich in grace,
The help, the hope, the solace of his race.

What wondrous fire makes eloquent his
speech,
Whose voice inspired above the earth can
reach!
What strange, sweet force doth make his
weakness strong
Whose heaven-directed hand
Is nerved by all that radiant mighty throng
That by the Father stand,
Fair messengers of good who linger there,
With listening hearts to hear, and strength
to answer prayer!

Time and such Life! O world that casts
today
The Christian's jewel from its crown away,
Think ere too late what spendthrift fools
they be
Who fling their chiefest treasure in the sea,

Destroy the one sole grandeur that hath
shown
To Death a triumph greater than its own;
Who kill the seed that future fields might
bless,
And leave the earth to petty nothingness!

* * * * *

Thou, whose ripe years in such accord have
sped,
With seed of Faith in virtue harvested;
Whose loving labour still hath been to raise
The soul of man to joy of prayer and praise;
Whose hands upraised in benediction win
The gifts of Heaven to hide the shame of sin;
Whose lips but words of helpful cheer have
spoken

To fall on spirit broken,
Like healing balm that bids the soul renew
The morning gladness, fresh with Mercy's
dew!

Thou, on whose pathway to its native heaven
The golden star of jubilee hath risen, —
How, in thy nature's high, benignant plan,
Time and the Hour have blessed the Life
of Man!

Under thy fostering touch,
What new, fair armour hath been forged for
Right,
To strive against Wrong's mastery, and such
Dark shapes as do with human progress fight:
The Midas' blight that turns to sordid gold
Men's hopes and aspirations, heaven-born;
The lesser lights that greater lights do scorn;
Doubt's haggard face, and cold,
That turns to seek the gloom, and shuns the
face of morn;
And that ignoble aim
Which, drunk with little knowledge, would
proclaim
The Soul divorced from its divinest mood,
And teach from books alone how to be great
and good.

Prince of the House of God! What lot
more blessed
Than thine, that lifted on the topmost crest
Of Faith's high mountain, sees the rich
increase
Of thy fair kingdoms in the fields of Peace!
No passing bauble hers of earthly power,
But for her lofty dower,

Humanity's large virtues made more great;
The poor man taught in Honour's rich
estate;
Wealth forced to hold her regal fee in
trust
To lift the weak, or hold herself accurst;
Wisdom refined by Truth's eternal grace,
Making the earth a glad abiding place
For all her children; Science seeking cause
To show the Maker greater than His laws;
And Charity, the great ennobling gift
Which nearest to the throne of Heaven the child
of man doth lift.

Onward the march of empire! Onward and
onward forever!
While the spirit of Life doth know its heritage
fair and blest;
While misery stumbles and gropes, and joy of the
earth can never
Grant to the heart content, or bring to the
tortured rest!
For hers are the only gifts which Man the Un-
dying prizeth;
Hers is the light that liveth though sun and
moon shall cease;

Till the stream whose fountain is God to its boun-
tiful source upriseth,
And the strife of a finite world is merged in an
infinite peace!

BALLADS AND LEGENDS



THE SONG OF OUR LADY

As once our Blessed Lady
Did walk across the land,
The young St. John beside her
Close clinging to her hand,

She sat her by the wayside
Her weary feet to rest;
In joy to trace the tender face
That lay upon her breast.

Beside the dusty pathway,
Where bare fields stretched around,
And not a word of flower or bird
Made glad with sight or sound,

Sat down the Queen of Heaven,
And on her knees its King;
Nor heeded she that cold and dree
The wintry mists did cling.

Then John spake out, but softly,
For that his heart was fond:
“ Wherefore wait here, thou Mother dear,
When paths are fair beyond? ”

But she, in holy silence,
With gravely smiling lips,
Did bend above her Sun of Love,
And kiss His finger tips,

Until the Saviour waking,
Did smile again to see
The sweetest face of all the earth,
That watched so tenderly.

And lo ! as wide He opened
Those eyes of love divine,
'Gan bird to sing and flower to spring,
And merry sun to shine,

Till all the darksome morning,
And all the dreary way,
Grew sweet with heavenly music,
And fragrant as the May.

Then gladly our dear Lady
The sturdy boy addressed:

“ And did ye think my little Son,
Wherever He might rest,

“ Would want for gladsome service
From all His creatures dear,
The small sweet wildflower of the hedge,
The bird that singeth clear?

“ The beauty and the gladness
Forever must they flow,
When for a space in any place
Child Jesus rests below. ”

Then homeward, gently smiling,
With Jesus on her breast
She turned, with John beside her,
To Nazareth, the Blest.

A LEGEND OF ST. DOMINIC

ONCE, in those days when Faith was star of Life,
Fixed ever in its firmament, tho' screen
Of darkness veiled, or cloud might intervene,—
And all its humble, common paths were rife
With odour of sweet sanctity, it fell
That worn with prayer and from long fasting
faint,
Sat with his brethren Dominic, the Saint,
Waiting the welcome summons of the bell
To break their morning fast; tho' now the sun
Three hours beyond its noonday course had run.

In holy speech and holier silence sped
The lagging hours, until the brethern twain
Who sought for alms, and sought, alas! in
vain,
Returned with empty hands. “ One loaf of bread
O Master! one poor loaf and nothing more,
For all our asking did the town-folk give,
To those who by the alms of love must live;
And as but now we reached the convent door,

A starving beggar loud for food did call
In God's dear name, and we, — we gave it all."

"Now praised be He who granted ye such grace!"

Replied the Master. "Thus to read His will,
And hungry, give to one more hungry still!"
Then with a smile that gladdened all the place: —
"Come then, my brethren; since He deemed
it fit

That root nor crust be in our pantry stored,
Wherewith to deck this poor and empty board,
Let us in our accustomed places sit,
And drink a cup of water; while with prayer
The soul doth fill the body's lack of fare."

But scarce about the table were they met,
When the dim room grew fair with sudden
light,
And Two came in with garments shining bright,
Who at each hand a wheaten loaf did set,
And one full cup of wine which in the midst,
Before the Saint they placed; then vanishing,
They were not; but such fragrance left as Spring
Doth waft when little flowers are open kissed.
Then, every head in lowly reverence bent,
Blessing the Lord, they ate what He had sent.

Three days the gracious manna fed their need.

Three days the brimming cup from lip to lip

Did pass, nor lesser grew though each did sip
Its temperate cheer. Then taking pious heed

Of charity's sweet law, the food they gave

To want more pitiful, which may not feel

The heavenly trust that every pang doth heal;
Nor know how the high soul can crown and save
From mortal peril, hunger, woe, and pain,
If steadfast doth its faith in God remain.

*Such loving kindness did the Master show
To Dominic, his servant, here below.*

IN THE TOWER

(SIR THOMAS MORE)

AND hath it come to this, my daughter dear,
— My little daughter dearer than myself! —
That thou dost come to tempt thy father's soul
And play the serpent, even as Mother Eve
Did'st serve old Adam! Verily I deemed
That if all others doubting looked askance
And held me cursed with pride, and little wit,
Thou, bonny Meg, would'st read my heart aright,
And know me for the man I know myself.

For truly, tho' I question no man's truth,
Who takes this oath upon him; — tho' I fain
Would serve the King whose hand hath honoured
me,
Still must I think to please my God the more,
And bide what worldly hurt the time may bring,
Rather than He should turn his face away.

For I can bind my soul to no man's back
And bid him carry the poor load for me,
But of myself must travail.

How now, Meg!

Thy brow still drawn with heavy-knitted care!
And on thy lips, that tremble as they speak,
The question: "Wherefore shall I stick to swear,
When others yield them?" Nay, though all
men here

Did read their conscience, seeing this thing right,
And hold pure hands aloft to take the oath, —
There surely be fair souls in heaven to-day
That shall outnumber these an hundred fold
To stand beside me, lest alone I fall,
And hold my heart to steadfastness. God wot
I would not be a churl save for His law.

But on this issue I have slept o' nights,
And wakened mornings to renew the plea,
And questioned if there might be any way
Whereby my soul could glad its earthly Lord,
Nor shame the Greater. I have wrestled sore
With this poor flesh, that fain would cry for
grace

And bid me think of that which I have lost : —
The sunny fields of Chelsea, and the fair
White house wherein our happy lot was cast;
The song, the dance, the fireside set around
With loving face of friend, and wife, and child,

— Thy head, my daughter, resting on my knee; —
The high place in the Council; and the free
Companionship with souls that lit mine own
As flint doth kindle wax; Fame, Fortune, Gold, —
See thou how true I count the bitter cost,
Yet waver not! For truly, tho' I be
A man as weak as any walks the earth,
Still can but come to me what God doth
will,
Nor shall there lack His grace to bear with it.

Strait is this little room, and dark, and cold;
But let none pity me that I am held
Shut in from the glad air and light of heaven!
For in this narrow chamber I have known
Such peace of mind, such golden-girdled hours,
As make me like unto some well-spoiled child
Whom God doth set, all loving, on His lap
And dandleth there. So tho' the body fret
With pinching ache, and sorely smitten sense
That hath been used to softer hap than this,
Yet hath my soul known never such delight,
Nor revelled in such high, untainted bliss,
When this poor shell that holds it walked with
Kings,
And slept on down, in palace chambers laid.

Now then, my Meg! Shall I not see again
The wimpling laughter light thy bonny eyes,
The sweet, shy dimple dance upon thy cheek,
Since all that stands 'twixt me and perfect peace
Is thy grave forehead? Why, but look you
now!—

If one should come, and for a passing grief,
A little day of absence or of pain,
A swift vexation that would come and go,
Should offer me most lordly recompense
Of wealth and honour, — aye, should even say:
“If this thou dost, behold! thy place shall be
Beside me on the throne for ever more!” —
Would you be vexed, and whimper like a babe,
And stand against my way with tears and prayers?

Nay, rather wouldst thou perk thyself in pride,
Put all thy jewels on, and silken state,
Hold up thy head, and look the world i' the face,
That thou hadst been the child of such an one.
And yet, my Meg — dear daughter of my heart! —
This shall the Lord of Lords say unto me,
If I but hold my courage. Cheer me then
With voice and smile, and show me thy content,
That mine may be the greater. And be sure
That in that Higher Court to which I go

— By God's good mercy! — I shall not forget
To plead thy cause, and all beloved of thee.

Into mine arms once more! Now thus — and
thus —

And so, Sweetheart, — farewell a little space.

THE BALLAD OF ELIZABETH ZANE

WHAT is thy spark, O Freedom! that kindles in
soul of man
Flame of honour and love, burning its chaff
away;
Making of weakness strength, and welding the
broken span
Of Life to immortal deeds and fame that shall
live for aye!

Youth and age alike fuse in its molten fire;
Shrivel the hindering bonds of sex, and age, and
creed;
The woman beside the man, the child beside the
sire
Shine with an equal glory born of an equal
deed!

* * * * *

Ye who love in the past to scan
Glory of daring in heart of man,
Glory of daring on land or main,
List to the song of Elizabeth Zane.

Braver story was never sung!
Slight was the maid, and fair and young,
Gently born and gently bred,
Kin of heroes living and dead.

Fincastle Fort of fair renown,
Stood on the river by Wheeling town,
Set amid fields of wheat and corn,
Guarding the hamlet where she was born.

Fair was the feast September spread:
Wheat was golden and wine was red,
Blazed the hillside with scarlet flame, —
When down on the clearing the red-skins came.

Full five hundred, with whoop and shout.
— Led by a black-souled renegade scout, —
Savage with hate, and fierce for blood,
Down they swept from the burning wood.

Time there was none to fight or plan;
Woman and child and youth and man
Sped to the Fort like a rising wind;
Barred and bolted the gate behind.

Set them to work with courage bold,
Musket to load and ball to mould,

Mouths to feed, and wounds to dress,
And hearts to hearten in sore distress.

Hope is strong, and God is good !
Fast at his post each brave man stood ;
Forty and two were they counted out, —
And full five hundred devils without !

Twice from the gate a handful brave
Into the wrack of the conflict drave
A swath of death on their stormy track ;
Of sixteen going, not one came back !

And ever through cranny and crevice sped,
An arrow entered, and one fell dead ;
Until of courage and hope bereft,
Thirty are taken and twelve are left.

Then, that horror the dregs should drain,
Spent is the powder grain by grain ;
The last charge rammed in the smoking gun,
And the long day's fighting but well begun !

The Captain smote with his lifted hands :
“ Out in my cabin a full keg stands,
But sixty paces between us lie, —
How can I send one more to die ! ”

Then to his side, with cheek of flame,
Little Elizabeth softly came,
— Kin of heroes living and dead, —
“ Man nor boy can be spared,” she said:
“ I will go out to the house instead.”

Pleaded she well, till the bolt he drew;
Swift as a vision she bounded through,
Sped like a deer across the grass; —
And the Indians paused as they saw her
pass.

Paused for a moment and let her go
With never an arrow or tomahawk blow,
— Through fear or favour, who may know? —
And each one seeing her held his breath,
Till she ran through a silence deep as death.

Never a foot to hers gave chase.
She lifted the keg from its resting place,
And staggering under the burden sore,
Into the sunshine she came once more.

Then like a tempest of iron sleet
Hissed the bullets about her feet,

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The whistle of arrows rose and fell,
And the loud woods roared with the roar of
Hell.

But as if great Jehovah's hand
Bore her triumphant through shot and brand,
With wild heart beating and choking breath,
Safe she came from the gates of Death.

And the valorous handful of fighting men
Cheered till the forests rang again;
While under the cloud of battle smoke
Once more the voice of the musket spoke,
Holding the desperate foe at bay,
Till succour came with the falling day.

So was the Fort at Wheeling saved;
And so in letters of gold engraved,
While joy in daring and pride remain,
Shall live the deed of Elizabeth Zane.

TWO IDYLS IN HUMBLE LIFE

I

WHEN DENNIS COMES HOME TO HIS TAY

THEY may talk of their horses an' houses,
The pictures that hang on the wall,
The fine sparklin' rings on their fingers,
The servants that come at their call,
The swish of their silks an' their satins,
Roast beef an' plum puddin' each day, —
But I envy no woman her riches
When Dennis comes home to his tay!

To be sure when he goes in the mornin',
— With the children to clean an' to comb,
An' the three little rooms to make decent
In the bit of a place here at home,
With mendin', an' washin' an' makin',
An' dinner to get by the way, —
There isn't much time to be idle
Until he comes home to his tay.

But then we're as nice an' as tidy
As if we had money galore!
The stove like a cat's eye is shinin',
You could eat your three meals on the floor,
The bit of a plant in the window
Is as fresh as a mornin' in May,
An' the children go wild with their nonsense
When Dennis comes home to his tay;

The kettle is singin' its welcome,
There's a good bit of beef in the pot,
The tablecloth's clane — for I washed it, —
The dish of potaties is hot;
We're healthy, an' happy, an' hearty,
So thank God for his blessin's, I say!
For 'tis we that have cause to be thankful,
When Dennis comes home to his tay.

For then with his pipe in the corner,
He can sit down as well as the best,
With his bit of man's gossip to give me,
An' I have my minute to rest
An' to tell him the news of the neighbours,
While the children go on with their play,
—Oh! I envy no woman her riches
When Dennis comes home to his tay!

II

A SIMPLE STORY

WHEN John and I were wed, there was little
gold to spare;
We had neither house nor land, but the world
was very fair;
For we loved each other well, and our hearts
beat brave and high,
And no queen upon her throne was a prouder
wife than I.

For we were strong and young, glad enough to
save and moil,
And the slender fortune grew bit by bit with care
and toil,
And the little house grew bright with its signs
of homely thrift,
And our baby girl came as a second Christmas
gift.

Well, God alone, Who knows how our weak hearts
fall from Him,
Can tell why now at last did our sun of gladness
dim;

When the cup of joy was full to the brim and
 running o'er,
Why I dropped it from my hand like to one who
 cared no more.

For the fault was wholly mine. John was true
 as truth always;
And his kind eyes met my own with new trouble
 day by day,
When he saw the angry glance, when he heard the
 voice ring high
In fretful, vain complaint, half a threat and half
 a sigh.

There had come that very year to the great house
 near my door,
One whose wealth was past the counting; and
 my foolish heart grew sore
With a half unconscious envy, that grew large
 by slow degrees,
Of the jewels of my neighbour, and her pleasures,
 and her ease;

Till I came to hate the cheapness of my plain,
 poor, woollen gown,
And the care-won household comfort, and my
 hands grown hard and brown;

Till I grew to count the trouble, and to let my
soul repine,
With no prayer of glad thanksgiving for the blessings
that were mine.

And ever as the days went by I fell from bad to
worse,
Till the evil spirit held me like the shadow of a
curse;
Then at last a real sorrow came to cut me like a
knife, —
For sorrow is God's surgeon, that doth probe the
wounds of Life.

The baby, whose sweet lisping I had heard with
heedless ears,
Whose tender, clinging fingers had not dried my
selfish tears,
My pretty dimpled darling, with her cooing baby
breath,
Went down amid the shadows to the very gates
of Death.

And in the awful anguish of those weary, waiting
days,
When like Paradise behind me looked the old
familiar ways,

The thought that cursed was lifted, and my soul
 could breathe once more,
Though the gulf of loss and grieving stretched
 dark and deep before.

I saw again the beauty of the heaven so nearly
 lost,
And my husband's strong arm held me till the
 fearsome time was crossed,
And my baby lived to bless us, and I learned to
 know again
The bliss that comes with toiling when true love
 doth ease the strain.

I knew, as now I know it, — though times have
 changed since then,
And John can count his thousands with the wealth
 of other men,
Though the little maid we cherished is a woman
 happ'ly wed,
And the lusty boys, God bless them, stand tall
 above my head, —

I knew as now I know it, that the sweetest joy
 God sends
By the blessing of His goodness, nor on wealth
 or power depends;

That the spirit is the fountain from which hope
and gladness flow;
And the smallest hearth an altar, where the fire
of love may glow.



SONNETS



ON THE LONG JOURNEY

WHEN hearts grow cold, and buoyant pulses fall
To the slow beat of tempered joy and woe,
That marks the halting march of Life below
Time's sombre arches; when the jocund call
Of Youth to Hope droops wearily, and all
The dancing motes that flash in Pleasure's glow
Change to gray dust that every wind may blow, —
Be not o'erborne, nor let despair enthrall.
But as one faring to some happy place
Where friends do wait, and love, and blessed
cheer,
Heeds not the cloud, and laughs the rain to
scorn, —
Bid thy true soul take courage for a space;
How can he yield his heart to pain or fear,
Whom at the end Joy waits, and smiling
Morn?

TO ONE NEW BORN

WHAT of the dawn, O child most fair and dear!
When first the wondrous glory of the Lord
Flashed on thy spirit, and the full accord
Of angel voices smote thy waking ear!
What glad, harmonious welcome, high and clear,
Did sing like birds above the happy sward,
And lift thy heart on one triumphant chord
To know the joy we can but dream of here!
In one swift moment, did thy soul achieve
The calm repose that waits on perfect bliss,
—Forgot, for once and all, Earth's passing
woe —
Or did some pale, unconscious longing cleave
Thy heart with memory of the long, last kiss
That sealed thine eyes in this sad land below?

SURSUM CORDA

FALLS on the kneeling multitude a sweet
And sudden hush, as if with one accord
Their eyes beheld the Presence of the Lord,
And bowed in voiceless homage at His feet!
Before the shrine the veil of incense rolls;
Enraptured voices, rising high and higher,
With one long burst of love and joy expire,
In breathless longing from uplifted souls.

O blissful ecstasy! Most precious gift,
That thus can free from all the bonds that pull
The wingèd spirit backward to the clod!
And through the maze of earthly cares uplift
One moment of rapt silence, wonderful
With holy fear, and holier love, of God!

SORROW

I SAID to Sorrow, once when all the land
Was dim because of that pale smile she wore,
— Wraith of past joys, that smile, alas! no
more, —

“ How can they name thee of His kin, Whose hand
Is lifted never but to bless and save?

Lo! in His path is Life, and Life's increase,
The rose of Joy, the lily of sweet Peace,
While thou dost dwell in shadow of the grave!”

Then spake she lowly: “ Yet am I His own;
Nor from His vision do I walk apart,
Nor live but in the beating of His heart.

This hath He left to me and me alone:
The spring of bliss that all Earth's woes doth
leaven,

The night that broadens into dawn of Heaven.”

ON THE MOUNTAIN

Not in the happy meadows, fair bedight
 With wreathèd flowers, and set in golden ease,
 Where laugh bright waters under whispering
 trees,
The soul of man puts on its purer sight.
But far above, upon the stormy height,
 Set round with lightnings, torn by storm and
 breeze,
 Where the tired climber falls on trembling
 knees,
His soul doth win the vision of delight!

O blessing by Divinest Mercy sent
 To soothe the hurt of weariness and toil,
 Strike in our hearts great Patience' mighty
 chord!
That howsoe'er with strain of effort spent,
 Through sweat of brow and stain of earthly
 soil,
 We yet may rise to glory of the Lord!

THE GOOD BISHOP

FOR the first time, with cold unanswering eyes
He passed above the paths so often trod
In cheerful service, winning men to God,
Beneath the strong, white glory of the skies.
No pomp of mourning blazoned forth to fame
His golden record; but young hearts oppressed
With sense of loss, in reverent silence blessed
The holier might of his beloved name.

O Blameless Knight! why would we mourn to
know
Thy soul uplifted nearer to the Lord!
Since nought that thou hast ever done below
But lives and bourgeons in more glad accord;
And words that trembled with the living breath,
Now flame immortal on the lips of Death.

AT THE START

I

As some strong runner girded for the race,
— The lithe frame bent from eager foot to head
Like some strained bow ere yet the shaft be
sped, —

Stript of all hindrance stands within his place,
The clear eyes burning in the steadfast face

Waiting the signal; not in fear or dread,
But swift, exultant longing that doth shed

A glory over all the waiting space, —

So dost thou wait, Belovèd, at the start!

All life before, undimmed by grief or sin;

Joy in thine eyes that smiling seek the goal;

Love on the lips; and honour in the heart;

Strong foot and hand the daring prize to win,

And God's own sunshine resting in the soul!

II

Keep them, thou dearest! Nor for lands, nor gold,
Nor Fame that scathes with fierce and ruth-
less fire,

Nor those fair golden apples of Desire

By friend or foe across thy pathway rolled,
Let these great gifts of thine be bought or sold.

Bow not thy glance, nor let the swift foot tire
In lower paths. Still bid thy thoughts aspire
To the brave heights that beckoned them of old.
Nor pass unseeing, in the headlong way,

The dear delights that wait for who will take;
The bounty that doth rest beside, above; —
Let still the hearthstone warm thee with its ray;
And know, of every joy that Time doth make,
The best is Truth, the holiest is Love.

THE CHOICE

IF sudden to mine eyes' joy-dazzled bliss
Some happy dawn, the Angel of the Lord
Should come all glorious, hiding his swift sword,
And in glad greeting stoop my brow to kiss,
With message from the Master, that should grant
The dearest wish my soul could know to frame,—
What could I ask in that Most Holy Name,
That in this life most blessing would implant?
Not for great gift; nor even virtue great,
In steadfast mood of constant righteousness
Uplifted, far apart from other men;
But that in daily living's poor estate,
I might divine my stumbling brother's stress,
And with strong hand-clasp lift him up again.

THE HERO

HIM they call Hero, who in one fine burst
Of splendid courage, mid the world's acclaim,
Doth storm the shining heights of mighty Fame,
And win his crown, though Fortune do her worst.
How shall we speak his holier name, who strives
In hidden silence and with labouring breath,
Against the fearsome shapes of Pain and Death,
Counting his laurels in glad human lives?
Who gives to Woman joy too deep for words;
Calls back to her dear eyes the light of Hope,
And sets her feet on that fair upland slope
Where children's voices sing like happy birds.
Nay! like the Master be his memory blest, —
The Good Physician's name leads all the rest.

THE AMULET

Not, O Belovèd! that these eyes of mine
 May haply with thee find some little grace,
 That makes them fairer than a fairer face;
Not that my soul doth strive to mate with thine,
And, moved by the hot strength of love divine,
 Doth climb with thee from its own lowly place,
 And stand enfranchised in the freer space
Of lofty thought, where clearer light doth shine; —
Not for such guerdon make thou me thine own!
 For beauty fades while morn is with us yet,
 And with long flight the spirit's wing may tire;
But for the hidden self which thou alone
 Dost know as thine, which Time can never
 fret,
 And Death itself but fan to purer fire!

GOOD FRIDAY

DAYS have been glad since first the world began, —
Brave days of triumph, when some warrior soul
Swept like a sunburst onward to its goal;
Days rich in honour; days that lifted man
The glory of The Master's plan to know;
And holy days made odorous by the faint
Sweet perfume that some lily-crownèd saint
Did leave to bless the paths he trod below.
But thou alone beneath the circling sun
Art called The Good! since from thy happy
gloom
The hope of all the earth doth rise and sing!
By thy sweet pain immortal joy is won;
And lo! within the shadow of thy tomb,
Is hid the root of Easter's blossoming.

THE TOILERS

WHEN the gray morning fills the city street
With ashen light, slow filtered through the bars
Of close-set houses, and the wintry stars
Pass in the east with slow, reluctant feet, —
Like some long flight of sparrows, bare and brown,
The Toilers come from hidden nook and lane,
With varying voice of laughter and of pain,
To peck for daily bread about the town;
And with the evening turn to rest again.

Ah! ye whose careless glance scarce stoops to
rest

With scorn on what such sordid life en-
dures, —

Pause, lest sometime with wide and clearer ken,
These sturdy, upright souls may rise all blest,
And with strong pity turn to look at yours!

TWILIGHT ON HARVARD BRIDGE

I

As in a dream the shadowy city lies
 Wrapped in soft silence; while like jewels fair
 Meshed in the dusky tresses of her hair,
A thousand lights outflash on gazing eyes
That note her loveliness. The brooding skies
 Glow yet with flush of sunset fires aflame
 On distant hilltops; while the nearer air,
Dark on the darkling waters sinks and dies.
Spent for a time the tumult and the fret;
 The sordid aims that clamour for the prize;
 A gentler mood doth wake of pure delight:
And lo! above the roof of darkness set,
 Where through the day the clouds of smoke
 arise,
 Pillar of flame she shines above the night!

II

Fair art thou when the rosy flush of dawn
 Doth wake again on climbing spire and tower;
And fair when noonday pomp of pride and power

Floods thy full pulses. But more fair withdrawn
As now from all the petty greeds that spawn
About thy greatness. In this golden hour
Is laid the seed which in good time shall flower
On loftier heights to which thy soul is drawn.
For now to nobler needs the soul doth turn;
To lessons deeper than the lore of schools,
The fireside calls to feet and hearts that roam;
Behind each pane the lamp of love doth burn;
And he who serves, alike with him who rules,
Builds the great future on the hearth of home.

AT THE CHURCH DOOR

HERE is the open portal, whereby Peace

Doth woo thee to its most divine retreat.

Without, the noise and groaning of the street,
In the fierce strife for wealth and wealth's increase
Surges like baneful thunder, nor shall cease

While morn to night and night to morn repeat

The dreams of wild ambition, and the fleet
Strong tide flows onward, giving no release.

But enter thou! A soft, encircling gloom,

With broken sprays of jewelled light a-bloom,

Mellow with incense and the voice of prayer;
And in the mystic glory of His shrine,
One, Holiest, Who with welcoming hands divine
Doth wait to free thy soul from sin and care!

A MESSAGE

THOU gentlest soul that ever left this earth
The richer for its passing! Ye pure eyes
That saw God's love, through every vain disguise
Which wrong, or hate, could weave to hide its
birth!
Thou dearest heart, whose charity did flow
Like some clear stream, that through the common day
Leaves cheer and helpfulness upon its way,
And fills the need alike of friend and foe! —
We will remember thee as one who stayed
Within our House of Life, to lend a grace
Of joy and blessing where his foot did roam;
Then, every debt of love and duty paid,
Lay down at night to sleep a little space,
And waked, with morn, to find himself at
Home.

AT CHAMOUNIX

I

THE deep cup of the valley overran
With froth of cloud-drift, foaming from the crest
Of hidden summits, and the deep unrest
Of churning mist; not larger than the span
Of dungeon walls, were those that hid from sight
The glory that we knew was waiting there.
Then one swift spear of sunbeams clove the air,
And lo! uplifted in a wondrous light
Of awful beauty, twinned of love and dread,
— Like some rapt soul that soars from earthly
care
In strong, fierce ravishment of silent prayer, —
The Great White Mountain lifted up its head!
Then lost in cloud, like smoke that quenches flame,
The radiant vision vanished as it came.

II

Nay, shall we call it vanished? Long forgot
The sobbing of the rain amid the grass,
The gray winds smiting down the stormy pass,

The slow foot climbing, wearily and hot
Through mire and sharpness of the stony way.
Fled all the painful stress of toil; the sense
Of baffled hope, that throbbed with longing
tense
For that expected dream of ecstasy.
But in an arch of ever-smiling sky,
Enthroned in holiness, a draught divine
To stir the pulse of being like new wine,
That loveliness doth fill the spirit's eye;
Through all Life's change, or Fortune's harsh
endeavour,
A moment's joy to glad the heart forever !

PROCEDE ET REGNA

I

THOU who dost till the furrows of the Lord!
Enriching with fond care the stubborn soil
Through endless weariness of loving toil,
And bidding harvests laugh above the sward
That once was barren. Thou whose tireless
strength
Doth guide the ploughshare, though the day be
long,
And rest woo sweetly with the evensong
To where the shadows fall at twilight length! —
Go on and prosper in thy chosen field
That lifts thy praise in ever ripening sheaves
And tender garlands of fresh buds and leaves!
Still make the land its wealth of homage yield
Unto The Master, that His eyes may see
This Earth more like to Heaven because of thee.

II

O Golden Jubilee of happy fame
Not built on sudden height of chance or state,
Or raised triumphant by red hands elate

With honour that is but the twin of shame !
Nay, even more blessèd than the wreath of bay
 Plucked for the honoured brow of seer or sage
 To mark his crown of earthly pilgrimage,
And cheer his feet on the appointed way !
For thy glad feast doth speak of Love and Peace ;
 Of Wrong set right ; of joy in Brotherhood ;
 Of Might subdued beneath the power of Good ;
Of Harmony Divine that shall not cease
Till human hearts do join in glad accord,
And Mankind knows the glory of the Lord.

DEATH

ONCE, as I tossed wind-swept from space to space
Of that pale sea that laps the shore of dreams,
Full of strange shapes, and sudden falling
gleams
That lit the sky as smiles do light a face,
Behold, a phantom that did choke my breath!
A vague, wild horror, rising through the air,
Darker than night, more awful than despair, —
And some one through the darkness whispered:
“ Death ! ”

Then straight I woke; and sudden seemed to know
In the rich joy that flooded soul and sense,
That thus at last, — the veil of sleep with-
drawn, —
I should arise in some far morning glow,
Snatched through a moment's fear to bliss
intense,
And find my soul awaking in the dawn.

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